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ABSTRACT

This document presents one in a series of twenty-three case studies derived from in-depth interviews using a sampling of former participants in the Mountain-Plains program, a residential, family-based education program developed to improve the economic potential and lifestyle of selected student families in a six-state area. Each case study contains the following information about a specific student family: biographical data; participation in the educational and community programs; home, income, placement, and employment data; stated problems and/or satisfactions; summaries of the participants' personal and social development; individual ratings of the program; scripts of personal interviews; interviewer comments; and individual test scores and self-assessments. This document presents specific findings on Ron and Dolly Bloom, a couple plagued by unemployment and marital problems. The follow-up study reports that after completing the program, Ron now works as a parking attendant and elevator mechanic and Dolly has joined the Army. (Names in these studies have been changed.) Two other documents are included in the series: a report which examines work and income variables for the group (ED 110 610) and a report which summarizes group findings on personal and social development (CE 014 681). Specific documentation for the instruments utilized in the study are included in both of these related documents. (BM)

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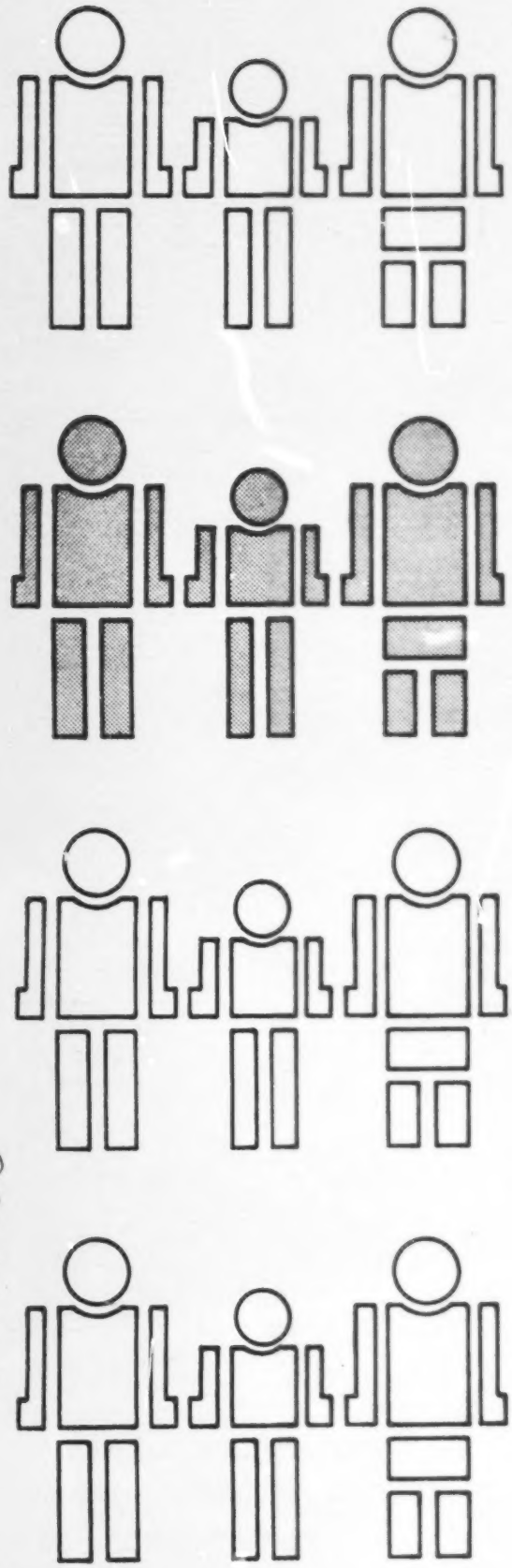

CASE STUDY REPORT # 7

Ron & Dolly Bloom

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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MOUNTAIN PLAINS EDUCATION ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM INC.

CASE STUDY REPORT

RON AND DOLLY BLOOM

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June, 1975

A Product of Research Services Division
David A. Coyle, Director

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PREFACE

Reports in this series are derived from in depth interviews using a stratified random sample of former Mountain-Plains students. Interviews were conducted from November, 1974 through January, 1975 by Mountain-Plains professional research staff. Case Study Report 1 examines Work and Income variables for the group. Case Study Reports 2 through 25 include specific findings on each family included in the sampling. Case Study Report 25 summarizes group findings on personal and social development. A summary of the research design for the Case Study Reports is documented in: Coyle, David A.; Conrad, Rowan W.; and Myers, Douglas D. In Depth Case Study of Exited Families: A Summary of the Research Design for Phase 1 Preliminary Effects Study. Glasgow, Montana: Mountain-Plains Press, 1974. Documentation for the instruments utilized in the study are included in both Case Study Report 1 and Case Study Report 25. All names in these studies have been changed.

Michael C. Fenenbock
Series Editor

David A. Coyle
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Services Division

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CASE STUDY REPORT

RON AND DOLLY BLOOM

BACKGROUND

Ron and Dolly Bloom entered Mountain-Plains in May of 1973. Both 19, the Bloom's were without children and had been living with Ron's parents in Great Falls, Montana.

Ron had a 10th grade education and some Job Corps training, had worked as a dishwasher and carpenter, but was unemployed at the time. Ron disliked his dishwasher job because of low pay and the type of work involved, and thought he would like to learn more about carpentry. Having been laid off from his previous job because of illness, Ron was unemployed for 7 months at the time of entry. The family received no welfare benefits in the year prior to Mountain-Plains entry, despite an income of only $2,725.

Dolly had a high school education which included OJT for secretarial skills. Her employment history included several months as a waitress. Disliking restaurant work, Dolly thought she would enjoy a secretarial position. She was also unemployed at program entry.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Ron entered Mountain-Plains with multiple problems, characterized in a Mountain-Plains report as extreme depression, marital disharmony, unrealistic attitudes, poor personal appearance/grooming, low self-concept,

lack of self-confidence, low motivation, lack of directedness, poor self-knowledge, low self-acceptance, no job-competence (despite Job Corps training), poor social contact skills, low level of trust and no dependability. Ron was also irresponsible, had little ambition, and was rated poor in maintaining interpersonal relations.

These problems were reported to be manifested through a variety of behaviors and attitudes.

Ron was shy, withdrawn, very poorly groomed, and often had moods of deep depression. He often "blanked out", as observed by instructional staff, during shop hours when he was involved with responsibilities at hand. Ron's explanation was that he was unaware of his not paying attention to what he was doing at the time; however, he reported his thoughts were often burdened with worries about marital problems that had occurred previously.

A lack of marital harmony was revealed in Dolly's expressed feeling that she was tired of being Ron's "mother" rather than his "wife". These marital problems were reinforced by Dolly's parent's constant opposition to Ron and the marriage, and by Ron's continued reliance not only on Dolly, but on his mother as well.

Ron was unable to establish or maintain long-term friendships, and displayed a low level of trust in his associations with others. Ron unwittingly established himself in situations where he would be taken advantage of, and used these examples to point out that there was no point in having close friendships, as

"others" could not be trusted.

Ron's lack of dependability, responsibility, competence and accuracy were reflected in his work in the occupational area. Ron had been a slow but accurate worker under direct supervision. Soon, however, Ron failed to progress in his understanding of work habits relating to the required material. After three conferences, Ron began to display an attitude of unconcern and seemed to regress in his work. It was felt by his instructors that Ron could have harmed himself and others with his incorrect use of tools in the shop. This seeming lack of ambition was reflected in an unrealistic attitude toward personal goals. Ron seemed unable to determine what field he wanted to train in and tended to rely upon his wife to "carry" responsibilities. His unrealistic attitude was also revealed in Ron's seeming unconcern for obtaining the supporting education (reading skills) necessary for his occupational area. When it was suggested that he develop these skills, Ron was unable to see the validity for building necessary foundations. For example, it was suggested that Ron develop a habit of reading the daily newspaper in order to improve his reading skills. Ron refused on the grounds that one could not believe what one read, and therefore, it was wasted effort to develop a habit of reading. Ultimately, Ron was administratively exited from the program for non-attendance and no progression.

HOME AND INCOME

Currently, Ron is living alone in a trailer house in Great Falls, Montana. His wife, Dolly has joined the Army and is away at basic training. Ron works as a

parking attendant and elevator mechanic at a local hotel for $2.25 per hour. He works irregular shifts with frequent overtime assignment. Ron and Dolly are buying the trailer and making $85 per month payments. The trailer is new, modern and well structured, sufficiently in disarray to remind one that it was currently a bachelor's apartment, but not dirty in an unsanitary sense.

Ron still does not dress well--even by parking attendant standards. He is, however, observedly not as shy as at the time he entered Mountain-Plains. Ron does not enjoy being alone, and he wished Dolly had not joined the Army. Their marriage is still troubled but they have no current divorce plans. Indeed, Ron hopes Dolly's opportunity to do something on her own (the Army) will in some way improve the relationship. Ron reports that the in-laws still interfere heavily and consistently in the marriage, and that his wife's joining the Army was pushed very hard by her father (retired Army).

No information is available on Dolly except through Ron. Ron gave a telephone number where Dolly could be reached, and in fact called her on the phone during the interview to ask whether or not she would be able to participate in a telephone interview at a later date. Dolly said she would be willing to do so, but numerous attempts to reach Dolly at the number listed were unsuccessful.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

As is evident in the report of Ron's entry condition, personal development was Ron's major problem. In evaluating himself now, Ron feels that as a

result of Mountain-Plains, he has improved his attendance, self knowledge, industriousness, courtesy, social contact and personal responsibility. Although no self-concept test instruments were administered at the time Ron entered the program, ample behavioral indicators exist to show that Ron suffered an extreme self-concept problem. The Tennessee Self-Concept Scale indicates that Ron currently has an uneven self-concept pattern; however, this is more favorable than could be predicted from program performance. (See Figure 4.) Ron is significantly above norm on both self-satisfaction (i.e., self-acceptance) scores and family self-concept scores. Ron still scores low on identity, behavior and physical self. Ron's total self-concept is about one quarter standard deviation below norm and his social self-concept is significantly below norm. His personal and moral/ethical self-concept are at the norm. Although the profile is spotty, it does tend to indicate that Ron has probably now achieved an adequate self-concept development to perform and hold a job.

Information emerging in the interview indicates that Ron's strong showing on family self-concept is related more to his role as a member of his parent's family than to his role as a member of his own family. In fact, Ron's two main concerns expressed during the interview were: (1) his own marital situation and wondering how that would be resolved, and (2) worries about losing his job because of a particularly insecure situation in a particularly insecure time. (The hotel where Ron works is losing money on the parking garage and there is the constant possibility they will close the parking garage or even sell the entire hotel, since it occupies valuable downtown space. Likewise, the men on the job

are at odds with the area supervisor and plan to approach the manager--even though they fear that if they don't gain their point, they will be fired.)

Ron feels that he has had both good and bad breaks in life. He relates his major good break is having a job in this jobless time. His main bad break, Ron says, was his wife deciding to join the Army. However, he said, he has not had many bad breaks. Ron is a little dissatisfied with his current life--mostly the fact that his wife is in the Army and his low income on the job ($2.25 per hour). Ron indicated he is satisfied in having a home and in his accomplishments, particularly his accomplishments in building things. For example, the wooden storage shed beside the trailer house was built entirely by Ron. He is also satisfied with himself because he has managed to quit smoking. When questioned about depressing factors in his life, Ron listed the same two things: (1) wanting a better job/worrying about making payments if he loses his job (for example, on the trailer house that he is purchasing), and (2) Dolly being away from home.

Ron believes he can influence his own future and says he can do this "by working the best I can at whatever I'm doing", and by, "being alert for opportunities to move to a better job."

Ron recorded a maximum score of seven on the Powerlessness scale and also scored above norm on Anomie. These scores indicate that Ron feels both alienated from his community and powerless within it. He is not integrated into his social field. (See Figure 3.)

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Ron reports his only responsibility to the community is to "Take care of my house and things." Ron does not vote. "I don't believe voting makes any difference." Additionally, "They are all just in it for themselves and none of them are going to do anything for anybody so why vote."

Ron has no community allegiance or involvement. His recreation is fishing, hunting, movies, bowling, music, and, on rare occasions, going to a bar. Ron is currently "into rock music," and has a small tape recorder that he carries with him everywhere, playing rock-and-roll tapes at every opportunity. Ron reports that Dolly is strictly an indoor person and does not enjoy any outdoor activity. The only things they do together is "indoor stuff." Ron has a color television which he sometimes watches, but says that he is not "into television much." (When he entered Mountain-Plains, Ron continually used TV as a withdrawal means.)

Ron does not recall being involved in any community activities at Mountain-Plains and says he did not go to any community meetings because, "The leader was not forceful enough." Ron says he participates in fewer out-of-home activities now than he did at Mountain-Plains because, "The facilities in Great Falls are much more strung out and much more expensive than those at Mountain-Plains."

WORK AND INCOME

Ron works as a parking attendant, a job which involves frequent repairs on

the elevator (all cars are taken to a different level by the elevator as they come in the door). The elevator is old and decrepit, and Ron has the repair job partially on the basis of his mechanical abilities. (All of the parking attendants are at least adequate amateur mechanics.) Ron says he feels very good about his ability to do the job but is undecided about how he feels about the extent to which the job uses his ability. Basically he is dissatisfied.

Ron feels good about his co-workers, bad about his salary, very bad about the fringe benefits (there are none) and undecided about his supervisor (this is because he has two supervisors, one of which he likes and one of which he does not like). Basically he approves of his direct supervisor, but the supervisor one step removed is evidently disliked not only by Ron but by his immediate supervisor as well (this emerged in the direct supervisor interview). Ron says the over-all working environment is good, that he has no particular feeling about company policies and procedures but does not like the hiring practices. (It seems that the disliked supervisor is somehow related to the manager.)

Ron characterizes his job as easy, boring, flexible and poorly paid. Irregular shifts are sometimes "a hassle." Ron says his co-workers are "okay" but that his "big boss" is a "hassle." However, Ron says he enjoys himself most of the time.

The thing Ron likes best about his job is that it is easy and that there is little supervision--Ron works mostly on his own. The things he likes least are the money and the manager. Ron says the manager is too much of a "goof off,"

that he is never there when he is needed, and that when he makes mistakes, he blames the people under him (namely Ron, his fellow parking attendants, and the direct supervisor of the parking garage).

Ron says the only problem that has been a "real hassle" for him on the job is the fact that his relief often comes late, which is particularly distressing when he has been on a ten hour night shift. He reported dealing with this by simply telling the relief man that he does not like it. Ron says the only time he feels especially good about his job is when he hears about others being laid off and then he is glad just to be working.

Ron's dissatisfaction with his job is clearly relected on the JDI scale. (See Figure 1.) Ron scored at the 25th percentile on work, the 15th percentile on pay. the 10th percentile on promotion, the 25th percentile on supervision and the 35th percentile on co-workers. (Overall Ron registers on the lowest satisfaction scores among men included in the follow-up studies.) Ron does appear to be a good emplyee, however. The immediate supervisor says that, "Ron does the job like it is supposed to be done." Ron has missed only one day of work in six months and this because he was sick. His supervisor reports that Ron's general attitude toward work is "good" and that his attitude is also "good" toward customers. Ron, his supervisor reports, does not like the manager--but neither does anyone else working there. Ron is reported to get along "good" with co-workers and to get along "okay" with his immediate supervisor but not very well with the manager. General comments from the supervisor

included, "Ron does what he has to do, he never shirks assigned work." However, Ron is only occasionally found to take initiative to do unassigned work. This favorable work rating also obtains on the MSS where Ron is rated at the 70th percentile on his overall work, the 85th percentile on his performance, the 60th percentile on conformance, and the 99th percentile on dependability, and the 50th percentile on personal adjustment. (See Figure 1.)

The discrepancies between his current work rating and his work performance at Mountain-Plains was discussed with Ron. Ron felt there were two things that might account for this. First, he did not have a good mechanical aptitude and should have been in carpentry because, "I really enjoyed building things." (He is much more confident about his ability to do the work on this current job.) Secondly, Ron says he is better able to deal with others now--that this was something that he learned at Mountain-Plains. Although Ron was "thrown out" of Mountain-Plains for non-performance, he says he does not blame Mountain-Plains. Rather, he said Mountain-Plains gave him every opportunity and he "blew it" all by himself. Ron reports he continues to have some difficulty dealing with people, "You can get some mighty damn obnoxious people parking their cars." However, Ron says, he has learned when to keep his mouth shut.

RATING THE MOUNTAIN-PLAINS PROGRAM

Ron rates Mountain-Plains as a positive influence in his life and says that even knowing what he knows now about all the problems that he would have and that he would be kicked out, he would probably still go as he derived a

great deal of benefit from Mountain-Plains.

The only aspect of Mountain-Plains that Ron found to be of little value were job training and home management. All other aspects of the program in which Ron was involved he found to be of either much or some value. Ron reports that he found Career Guidance[1] and consumer education to be the most benefit. Ron found home management to be the least useful part of the program. "I just couldn't get into it--it was kind of Mickey Mouse." The part of Career Guidance that Ron thought was most useful were world of work activities in terms of, "Knowing when you're going wrong in job interviews and stuff." Ron says he enjoyed Consumer Education because he learned about "contracts and things," useful for, "buying cars and insurance and all that. I didn't even know what a budget was before. I'd always heard about them and wondered what they were but I never really knew." (See Figure 5.)

Ron said his job skill training was inadequate but since he did not complete the program he could not say for certain whether it would have remained inadequate. Ron stated that he knew enough general mechanics to do any kind of work on his own car but that he could not work with sufficient speed, or on a wide enough variety of vehicles, to make a living as a mechanic.

When asked for suggestions in his training area, Ron suggested more "hands on" experience and less paper curriculum. Ron commented that additional

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[1] Somehow Ron did not connect his feeling of being in the wrong occupational area with Guidance!

staff were needed both in the shop and in working with the tool system. Ron also said that specific tools for specialization should be provided.

Ron thought his math was adequate for the jobs that he had been required to do and he thinks (and hopes) that the math that he learned at Mountain-Plains will be adequate for passing his GED. Ron says his English has been adequate, that Mountain-Plains helped him with his reading speed, but that he has not had to read anything on his job. Ron reports that English was hard for him and that, "It's definitely not my thing."

Ron says he would definitely change occupational choices now if given the chance--to carpentry because it comes easy, and he already has some knowledge gained in the Job Corps in the carpentry area. Ron declares that automotives was a mistake because, "I knew exactly nothing about it when I went in and that made it very hard," as he had no background upon which to build.

Ron feels that Career Guidance helped him with his appearance, punctuality, self-knowledge, and social contact skills. Ron says the biggest result of Career Guidance, however, was his increased sophistication about obtaining jobs and awareness of appearance. The only suggestion Ron would make to Career Guidance would be additional focus. He felt he spent considerable time going over irrelevant material not in the area of jobs that he was interested in.

Ron believes he improved his self-confidence and social contact skills in Counseling. Ron observed this was accomplished through group counseling. He

said in the "serious type discussions" they had in group counseling, "You could see the same problems you had in others and see others as being the same as you." Since his group counseling experience, Ron feels less inferior--it is now easier to talk to others whereas before talking "was very very hard." (Knowing Ron's in-program reputation for shyness and inability to communicate, the interviewer was surprised that during the interview Ron talked openly and seemingly comfortably.)

Ron suggested that Counseling employ more skilled counselors. He felt that the counselors needed to, "be more active in talking to the students--don't just listen to what we say. It is very hard for me to get problems out unless there is a lot of pushing and pulling. Sometimes I'm not even sure myself what the problem is." (Ron's comment is probably valid as regards counselor skill since his individual counselor--since departed--was rated at the bottom of the counseling staff by both the Counseling supervisor and the composite student rating.)

Although Ron was observed to be more skillful in conversations dealing with other people than at the time he entered Mountain-Plains, he continues to be shy. He could have been the supervisor for the parking garage but passed it up (even though it would have been more money) because, "I don't like to have to hassle other people."

Ron believes he copes with everyday problems well and gave three examples: (1) coping with his wife's being in the service by simply "catching himself" and refusing to worry about something he could not do anything about, (2) cop-

ing well with bills and, although he does not use a formal budget, he uses budgeting principles, "to keep track of them and to keep them all paid off," and (3) dealing well with on the job problems. Ron did not accept the supervisor position because it would have caused him to strain his interpersonal skills but, even though he dislikes conflict intensely, he did confront his relief man with his failure to relieve him properly.

Although Ron is more confident in dealing with health problems than previous to Mountain-Plains, he does not see himself as being any healthier now than before. Ron says he is now able to make ends meet dollarwise and that this is better than before Mountain-Plains. He is now making more money and has added skills in the use of money that he has. Ron says he and Dolly are currently able to agree on how to spend money, more so than before Mountain-Plains, at which time money spending "was a constant hassle."

Ron says while the Bloom's were at Mountain-Plains they manages to accumulate savings by budgeting tightly. However, this was "a hassle" because, he argues, they should have spent more money on recreation--needed to get away from some of the tension.

Ron says he is definitely more aware of the role of dress and grooming on the job. He reports that, while he still does not like to dress up and likes to wear sloppy clothes whenever he can, when it is necessary for job purposes or whatever, he knows how to dress and groom himself appropriately and does so.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The interviewer was aware of Ron's problems and progress while Ron was in the Mountain-Plains program. Ron was observed to have more self-confidence, more interpersonal skill and greater ability in conversation than at the time he entered Mountain-Plains. Strangely enough, the very experience of failing Mountain-Plains seems to have been beneficial to Ron. It seems that Ron has accepted responsibility for his failure rather than placing it on others. In fact, the only external blame he seems to place for any of his current problems is with his in-laws for a good deal of his marital problems, (After Dolly left for the Army he found a letter written to her by her mother which was very derogatory of Ron and overtly encouraged Dolly to leave him.)

Both Ron and Dolly appear to be from unhealthy home environments. Dolly's parents are over ambitious for her and overly pushy. Ron's mother, on the other hand, seems to overly protect. In fact, she called three times during the course of Ron's interview and has been encouraging Ron to move home and rent out the trailer house during Dolly's absence.

Ron could not be described as a ball-of-fire. His low satisfaction scores, along with the fact that his employment situation is unstable due to the economic "uninvitability" of the organization with which he works, does not argue well for Ron's ultimate success in his current employment.

Retrospectively, it appears that Mountain-Plains failed Ron in two areas. First, he was "allowed" to procastinate and ultimately enter automotive training al-

though he had bo background and low academic abilities. This would indicate that the guidance Ron received was not the best. Similarly, the problems that Ron brought to Counseling are not insurmountable and it would appear that Counseling could have made inroads in resolving problems specific to the marital communication. The fact that Ron had different counselors for group counseling (to which he credits great gains on his self-concept, self-confidence and social contact skills) and for marriage counseling (which was a combination of individual and conjoint with his wife) indicate that the Counseling failure was perhaps a personal failure.[2]

While Ron's current situation is far from ideal, he was observed to be several orders of magnitude improved over his entry in o Mountain-Plains. His self-concept score profile indicates that Ron should be able to maintain employment. His MSS rating likewise would indicate this. However, as mentioned, the satisfaction with his current employment would indicate a probable move either at Ron's instigation or by further deterioration of the garage.

Mountain-Plains appears to have been successful in impacting self-concept and interpersonal skills as well as job finding and getting skills. Mountain-Plains did not significantly improve his marital co flict nor has it improved his situation as regards specific saleable vocational skills.

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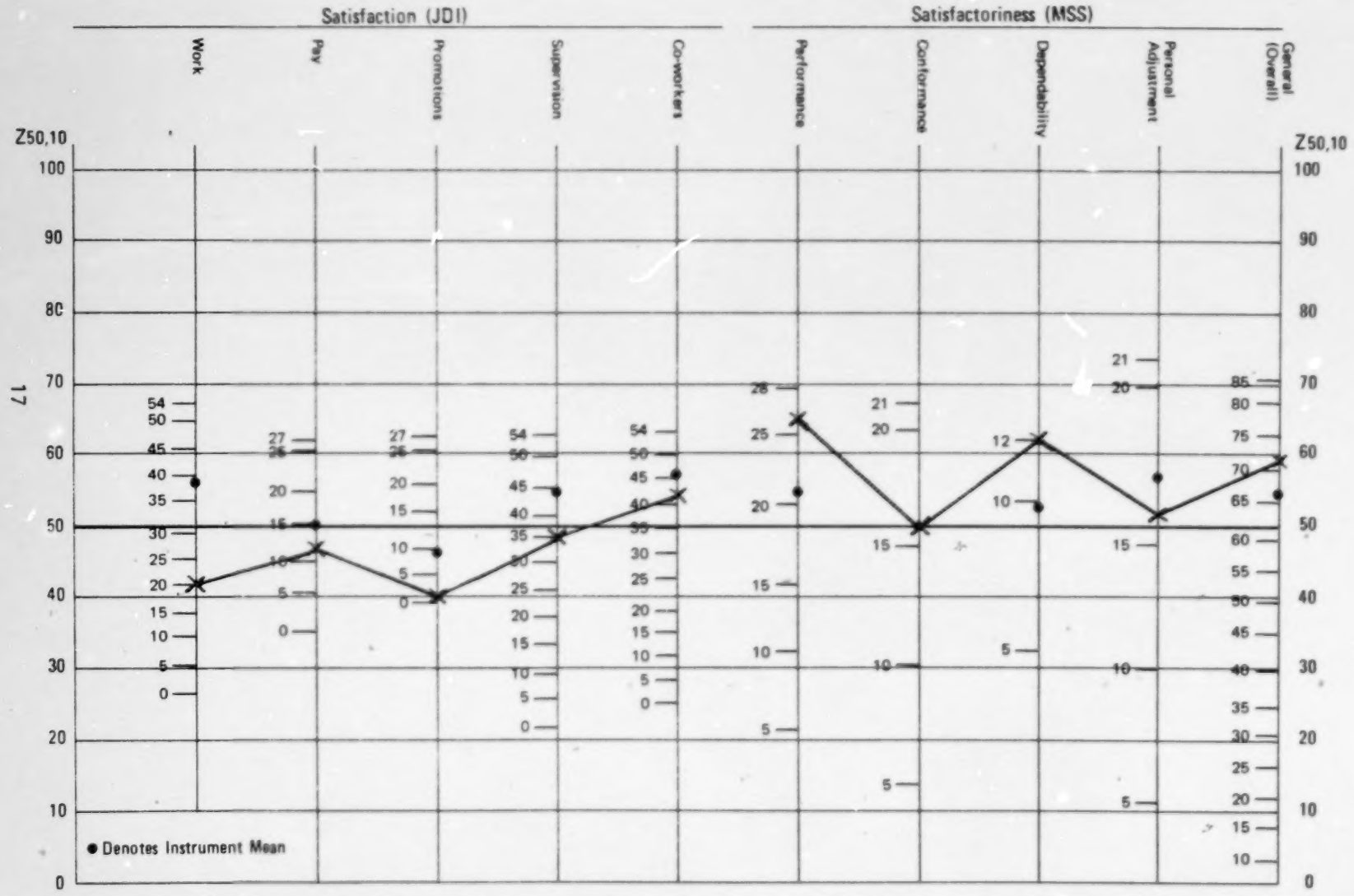
[2] Ron feels that he could resolve his marriage problems if his in-laws would stay out of it.

Figure 1

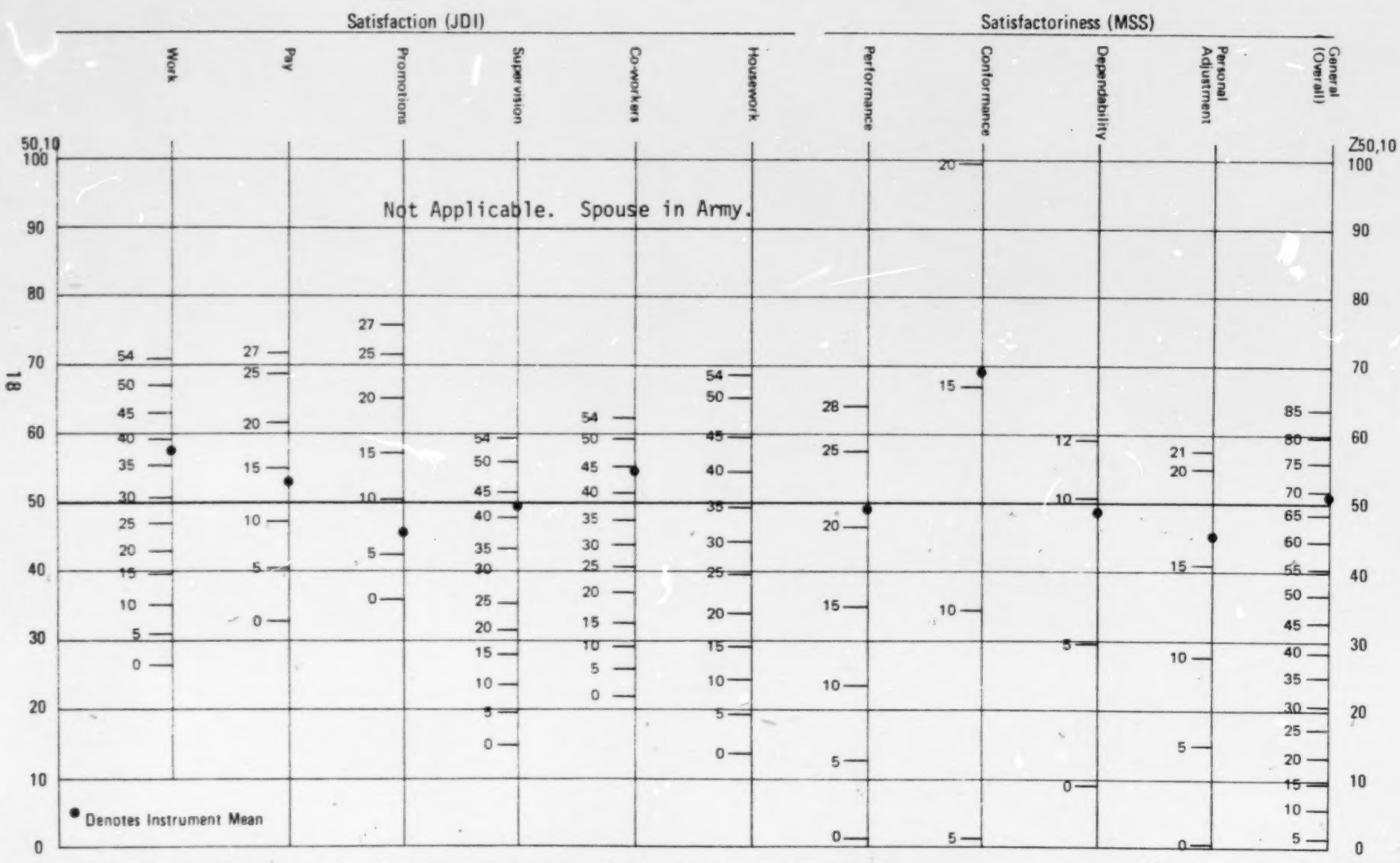
SATISFACTION AND SATISFACTORINESS – MALE



Note: Profile based on entering student scores.

Figure 2

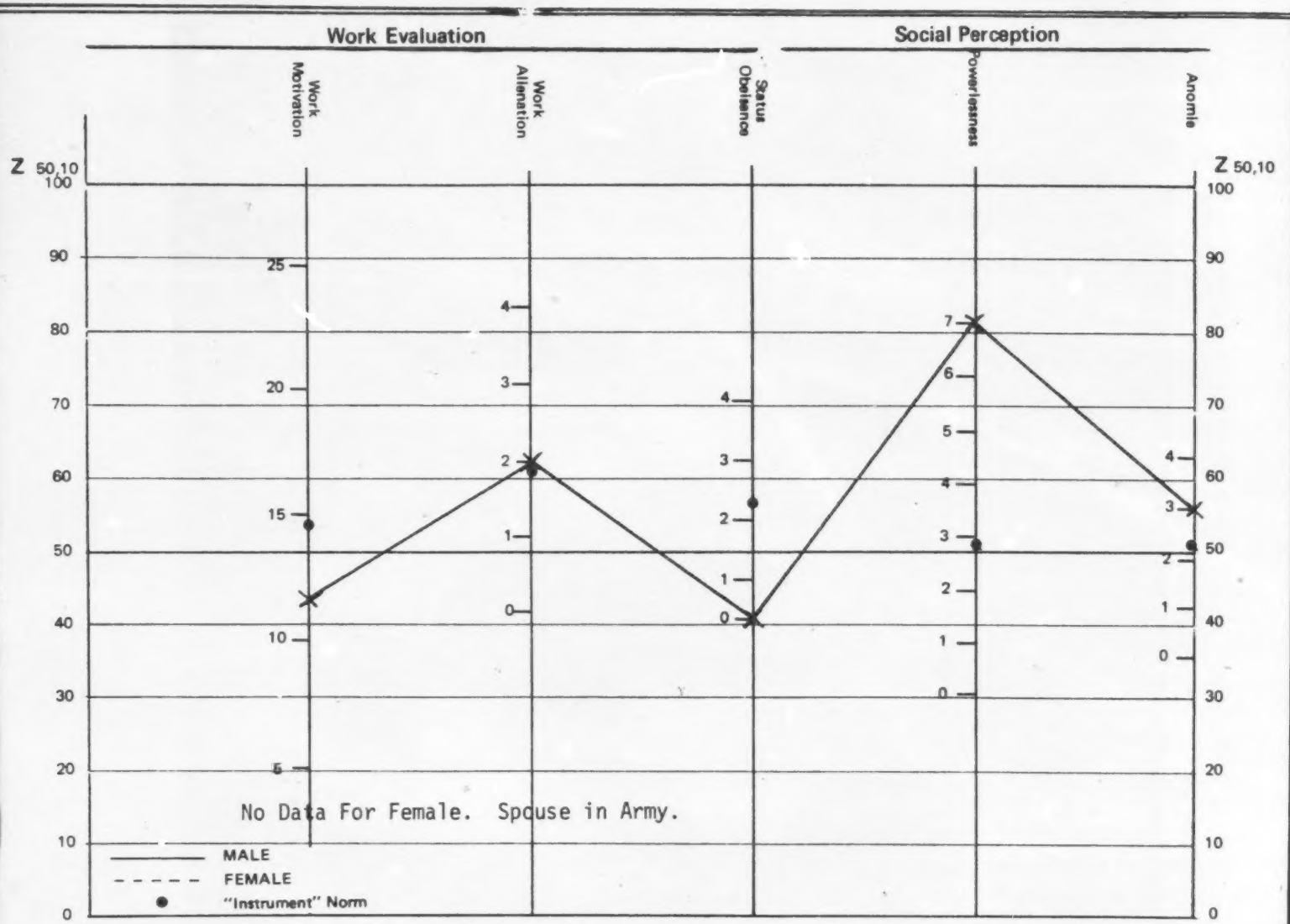
SATISFACTION AND SATISFACTORINESS – FEMALE



Note: Profile based on entering student norms except "Housework" which is based on instrument norm for employment.

Figure 3

MOTIVATION AND ALIENATION



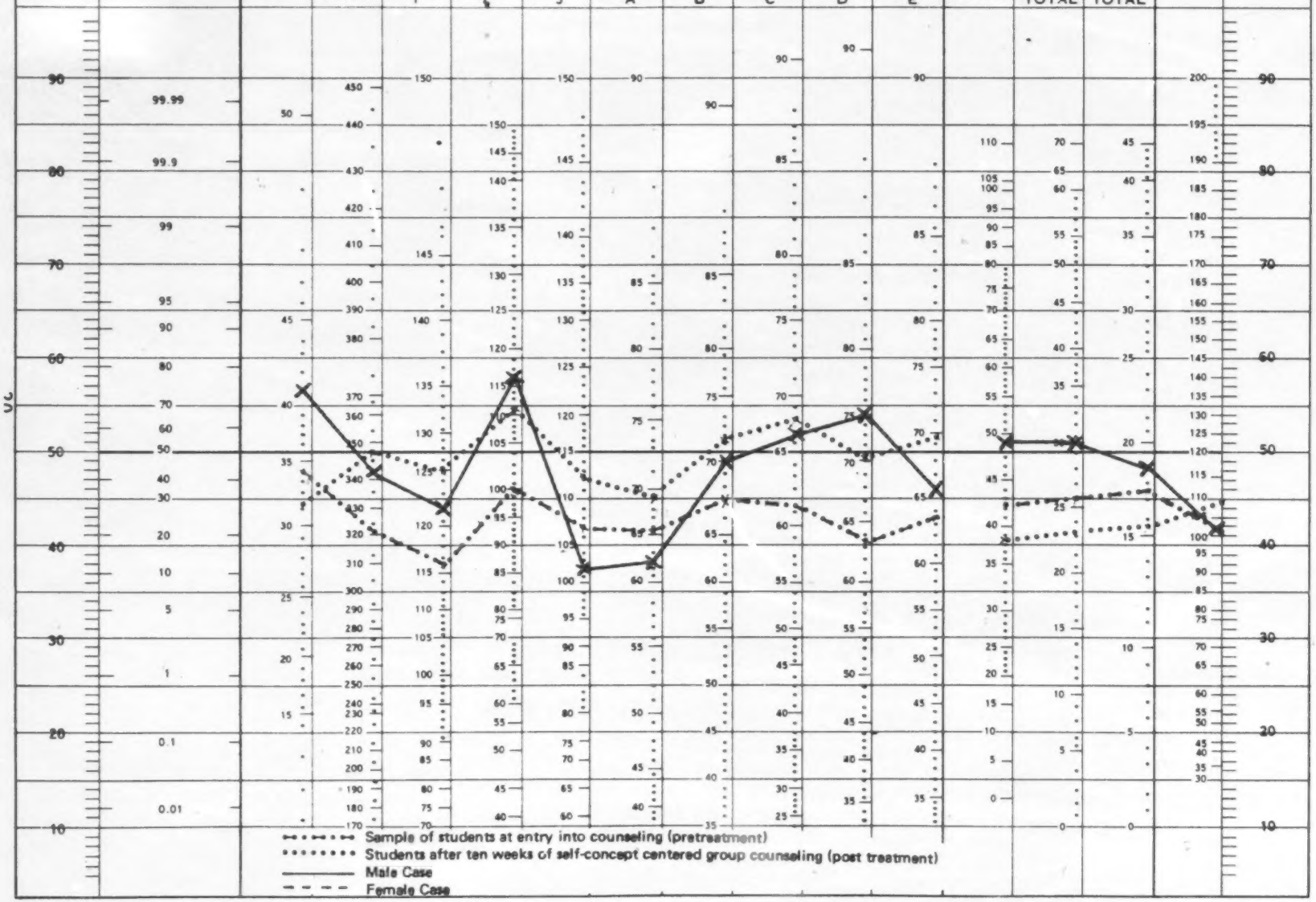
Note: Profile derived from entering student data.

Tennessee Self Concept Scale - Figure 4

PROFILE SHEET

Counseling Form

NAME | SCHOOL GRADE | SEX M F | AGE | DATE | TIME STARTED | TIME FINISHED | TOTAL TIME



Note: This is the standard profile sheet for the TSCS.

28 No Data for Female. Spouse in Army.

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Male					Female			
High		Low			Low		High	
Much	Some	Little	None		None	Little	Some	Much
		●	- - - -	Job Training	No Data Available. Spouse in Army.			
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Math				
	●	- - - - - - - -		English				
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Career Guidance				
			NA	Work Experience				
	●	- - - - - - - -		Counseling				
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Consumer Education				
			NA	Community Development				
●	- - - - - - - - - - - -			Recreation				
	●	- - - - - - - -		Health				
		●	- - - -	Home Management				
			NA	Early Childhood				

FIGURE 5

UTILITY RATING OF MOUNTAIN-PLAINS PROGRAM ELEMENTS

TABLE 1

SELF RATING OF PERSONAL AND WORK TRAIT CHANGES

	Male		Female	
	Improved	Regressed	Improved	Regressed
Attendance			No Data Available. Spouse in Army.	
Self-Knowledge				
Industriousness				
Courtesy				
Social Contact				
Responsibility (personal)				

TABLE 2

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. "Rate Mountain-Plains as an influence in your life."

	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Very Negative
Male		o			
Female	NA				

2. "Knowing what you know now, would you have chosen Mountain-Plains?"

	Definitely Yes	Probably Yes	Don't Know	Probably No	Definitely No
Male		o			
Female	NA				

3. "What is your rating for your current life in general?"

	Completely Satisfied	Well Satisfied	Neither Extreme	A Little Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Male				o	
Female	NA				

4. "Rate your success:

		Completely Successful 9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Completely Unsuccessful 0
The year before M-P."	Male									o	
	Female	NA									
Now."	Male					o					
	Female	NA									
Five years from now."	Male		o								
	Female	NA									